

The Story of a Great Educational Experiment

Valparaiso, the "Poor Man's University," Has Trained Thousands

SOME things can be done as well as others. This good American saying is luminously exemplified in the history of Valparaiso University in Indiana. Beginning in a humble way in 1873 with three instructors and 35 students as the Northern Indiana Normal School, this institution ranked in 1914 as one of the largest and most efficient educational institutions in America, with a faculty of about 200 professors and instructors and a student body of nearly 5,000.

In the zenith of its career, just before the outbreak of the European War, Valparaiso had attracted wide attention by its demonstration of several things very

new and astounding to the minds of the makers and maintainers of colleges and universities. First and foremost, it had built and equipped in the most up-to-date manner more than a dozen modern buildings. There are here and there institutions in our western country that arrogate to themselves the proud title of "university," although as a matter of fact they amount to little more than small-town high schools or small denominational seminaries. Valparaiso's credentials, on the contrary, were of a sort scarcely less convincing than those of Harvard, Yale or Princeton. It had—and it has at this day—in addition to its central College of Arts and Sciences, a College of Teaching, College of Applied Sciences, with schools of Engineering—Civil and Architectural, Chemical, Mechanical and Electrical; Schools of Home Economics, of Music, of Commerce, of Pharmacy, of Law, of Medicine, and a training school for nurses.

And because it is essentially a "poor man's university" and has developed out of the fundamental purpose of its founder of making "an education adapted to the wants of the whole community accessible to all," it has in addition, as preparatory departments, a university high school and a university elementary school. Its degrees are accepted on a par with those of the great universities.

Marvelous to relate, all this had been accomplished without an endowment! Not only was this "poor man's university" built and conducted without subsidy or subvention from state, church or millionaire, but it was paying its way, although furnishing university training of a high grade at less cost to its students than any other establishment of the sort in the world.

The secret, of course, is the man, or, rather, the two closely associated men, who put into the enterprise from the first and all the way through some things which money cannot buy: entire consecration to their work, a natural born genius for teaching, a definite and lofty democratic ideal, and unflinching enthusiasm. It might have been said of either Henry Baker Brown, the founder of Valparaiso University and its president for 44 years, or of his associate and successor, Oliver Perry Kinsey, as Garfield said of Mark Hopkins—that "Hopkins sitting on one end of a log and a boy on the other constitutes a great university."

Dr. John H. Roessler, who is now president of the university, told the writer that even in our present days of plain living at high cost, it is possible at Valparaiso to get comfortable board and room for \$5 or \$6 a week.

Along with this sort of plain living, went other conditions conducive to high thinking. There were no "frats" at Valparaiso in the early days, and "athletics," far from monopolizing any student's time and attention, simply filled its duly subordinate place in the provision for physical culture. Young men and women who went to Valparaiso went there to study.

There are now a dozen or more Greek letter fraternities and sororities affiliated with the national associations and an alumni magazine of recent date shows group portraits of the "frat" members in swallow tail coats, boiled shirts and white "chokers." It seems that the place of these fraternities is a subject of continuous discussion. Valparaiso has also taken its place in the intercollegiate athletic realm. Its teams have played football matches with Harvard and basketball with Princeton, and so all along the list; the students being particularly proud of the prowess of their baseball nine.

At the time of the writer's visit, Valparaiso had just passed through something of an upheaval due to the sensational resignation or removal of its president, Dr. Daniel Russell Hodgdon, who filled the press of the country with charges that the university was "a hotbed of Bolshevism, Communism and other cults." The alarmist nature of Dr. Hodgdon's attack on the institution of which he had been the head is well illustrated by a passage in his interview with a New

York Tribune correspondent in which he said: "The stream of propaganda can be traced to the very heart of the Federal Government, so firmly are its protagonists entrenched."

This remark had a rather cryptic sound. So on a recent pleasant day which the writer spent in talking with students, townspeople, members of the faculty and executives, he made it a point to seek the solution of the puzzle. So he put it up to a young fellow in khaki, whom he ran into. What did Dr. Hodgdon mean by "the very heart of the Federal Government?" the young man was asked.

The student laughed. "Well, I can't say, unless he meant to bestow that tremendous honor on Jack Pierce, who is one of the 200 ex-service

universities are supposed to be built and maintained, have come to occupy the lion's share of the time and attention of many, if not most, of the students. They have of late crept into Valparaiso, but in a modified form. The students go in for athletics only as a side issue when they can squeeze them in between the more important demands on their time of study. So with fraternities.

As to location, Valparaiso enjoys many advantages. It is 44 miles southeast of Chicago on the main lines of three railways. The town is remarkably healthy, having the lowest death rate among Indiana cities. It is in the midst of a fertile and picturesque farming country. Close at hand is a small chain of lakes that diversify the landscape and provide tempting objectives for hikes and picnic parties.

A few miles farther to the north are Lake Michigan and the world-famous Sand Dunes, while the historic Kankakee forms the southern boundary of the county. Such industrial and commercial centers as Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Indiana Harbor and South Bend are within an hour's ride.

Many students find employment in these centers during the summer, earning sufficient to pay a great part of their expenses for a year. Any three quarters (36 weeks) counting as a school year, makes it possible to complete a four-year curriculum (12 quarters) in three calendar years without reducing the time spent in actual residence. The university is almost continuously in session during 48 weeks of every year. For those not prepared to take the regular college entrance examinations, there is a high school and even an elementary school, so that neglected early education need be no bar. It is not unusual for men and women of 23 to 30 to start in on academic career here. Among "Valpo" graduates Senator Norris, of Nebraska, S. S. McClure, the magazine publisher, and Judge Frank P. Sadler, the popular lyceum lecturer, are conspicuous; but many others are eminent in medicine, at the bar, in business, engineering and music.

From the first, Valparaiso has been a co-educational university and as such has scored a decided success. All courses are open to men and women on equal terms. Fees are \$25 a quarter, or \$95 for the whole year of four quarters when paid in advance. Rooms may be rented in the university residence halls at from \$20 to \$25 a quarter, and good board is obtainable for \$4 a week and up. All the residence halls have steam heat and electric light and "there are laundries where students may do their own washing and ironing at negligible expense." All of which means that \$400 to \$500 a year will cover all expenses of tuition, board and lodging, with an allowance for books and laboratory materials.

President Roessler assured the writer that these low rates have been made possible by giving years of thought and well-directed effort to the problem, and quite without sacrificing the quality of instruction or the reasonable comforts of living. To make the advantages of education still further accessible, there are many opportunities for employment in the university, in business establishments and in private homes.

The 16 university buildings include an auditorium seating 2,000, with offices and lecture rooms on the lower floor, seven large school buildings and a smaller school building, three residence halls for women and two for men, a cafeteria dining hall, a library containing 30,000 bound volumes and 10,000 valuable pamphlets. There are a gymnasium 90x120 feet and an athletic field occupying 15 acres.

President Roessler continues to fill the chair of German and vice-president, and A. A. Williams that of mathematics in addition to their administrative duties. In fact, just now, every one connected with the institution is doubling up more or less to tide over the emergency caused by reorganization. The university suffered a severe falling off in both attendance and income on account of the war and the commercial and industrial unrest following the war. There is no attempt to disguise the fact that the financial affairs of Valparaiso University at the moment are in critical shape.

This great school which flourished unaided for more than 40 years and, unendowed, held up its head among the nation's best institutions of learning, is now seriously in need of financial assistance and makes frank appeal to all friends of democratic education. In July of last year, the school and its property were transferred to a board of trustees consisting of business men. Its most pressing debt is one of \$105,000, advanced by a bonding company which appraised the school property at more than \$750,000 and stated that its actual value was nearer \$1,000,000. So there would seem to be ample tangible security behind the contemplated bond issue of \$300,000, which it is hoped will be subscribed by the university's friends.

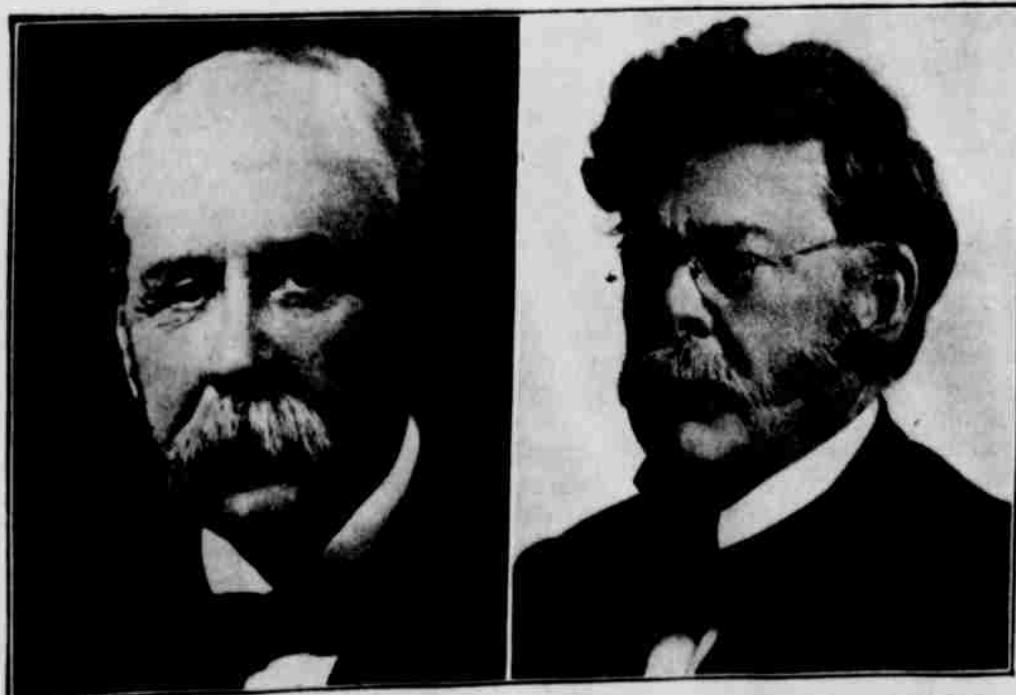


Administration Building, (original building of Valparaiso College and nucleus of present university). Above—President John E. Roessler, successor of Dr. Hodgdon and professor of German for 30 years.

men sent to Valparaiso for vocational training by the Federal Board. Dr. Hodgdon did not like Jack, because the latter, in his capacity as chairman of the student council, was influential in having that body pass a resolution accusing the president with trying to overthrow all Valparaiso's democratic traditions and line it up with institutions that are strongholds of privilege and class distinctions."

In the town itself, the writer found much resentment of what people called Dr. Hodgdon's "aspersions" and "libels," for it is worth noting that the people of Valparaiso quite identify the town with the university, and are keenly jealous of the good name of both. The secret of this rare identification of interests between "Town" and "Gown" is due to the fact that for nearly half a century the men and women identified with the building up of the university and forming its teaching staff have thrown in their lot heartily with the town and its interests. No small share of the university students are enrolled right in the home town and its immediate environs, although they also number representatives from nearly every state in the Union and every country in the civilized world.

Whatever the immediate upset over Dr. Hodgdon's charges may have been, his successor, Professor John E. Roessler, who has been connected with the university



Left—HENRY BAKER BROWN, founder and president for 44 years. Right—OLIVER P. KINSEY, vice-president during Brown's presidency and now president emeritus. The man who made good board at \$1.70 a week possible for 4,000 students.

for some 30 years, assured the writer that it has now passed over. In fact, both students and teachers seemed too busy to attach much importance to the episode.

The one thing that marks Valparaiso as an institution apart from others is that most of the students go there for the one purpose of getting an education. In almost every other college and university in the country, athletics, fraternities, "social functions," and other things outside the regular classes and studies for which